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Letter dated 15 August 2007 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a communication dated 10 August 2007 which I received from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring this communication to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Ban** Ki-moon

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Annex

Letter dated 10 August 2007 from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English]

In accordance with Security Council resolutions 1386 (2001) and 1510 (2003), I attach a report on operations of the International Security Assistance Force covering the period from February to April 2007 (see enclosure).

(*Signed*) Jaap **de Hoop Scheffer**

Enclosure

Quarterly report to the United Nations on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force

Introduction

1. By resolution 1510 (2003), the Security Council requested the leadership of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to provide reports on the implementation of its mandate. This is the thirteenth such report by NATO and it covers the period from February to April 2007.

2. On 29 April 2007, ISAF had 34,348 personnel from 28 NATO countries and 1,445 from 11 non-NATO countries.

Operational review

3. In this reporting period, ISAF has successfully pre-empted Taliban spring offensive operations by disrupting insurgent activity and command and control. The security situation has thus allowed continued maintenance and growth of projects, such as the Kajaki Dam.

4. Throughout the winter, Operation Oqab has continued along the Pakistan border area in an attempt to deny insurgents safe havens and prevent them from reconstituting operations and supply lines.

5. Operation Nowruz began on 21 March 2007 on a nationwide scale. This is an overarching framework operation, involving Afghan and ISAF forces building on the success of Operation Oqab in setting conditions for economic recovery. It is intended to extend the authority of the Government of Afghanistan, inhibit the ability of opposing military forces to conduct operations, and provide the security necessary to allow reconstruction and development.

6. Operation Achilles in early March saw the Afghan National Security Forces operate in the Sangin Valley and throughout Helmand province in order to improve the security and stability in the southern part of Afghanistan. Setting conditions for sustained economic development will include creating jobs and providing economic development opportunities for Afghans, increasing hydroelectric output and increasing irrigation. Despite high threat levels in the area, President Karzai visited the area of operation in late March, demonstrating the Government's commitment to making Operation Achilles a success.

7. Overall, the winter period saw the Afghan National Security Forces and ISAF successfully conducting operations that prevented the Taliban from launching a coordinated offensive over the spring. The momentum achieved will be maintained in order to continue to push for establishment and consolidation of Afghan development zones in the most volatile southern and eastern regions of the country.

Security situation

8. Opposing militant forces activity was concentrated in the south and east during the reporting period, with isolated attacks increasing as the weather improved over spring. Opposing militant forces tactics are based on low risk, high impact improvised explosive device attacks supported by robust propaganda efforts designed to undermine the credibility of ISAF and the Government. Opposing

militant forces attack levels are roughly twice as high as over the same reporting period in 2006. This increase is due to opposing militant forces initiative but also to the higher level of Afghan National Security Forces-ISAF activity throughout the country.

9. In the Regional Command Capital, for which Turkey took over command on 7 April, the decrease in attacks noted in the previous report continued in the early part of this reporting period. The relative quiet continued until March when there were a string of improvised explosive devices, including suicide attacks. Kabul remains the centre of gravity of the Government of Afghanistan and the international community and as such it is a prime target. Despite the low level of popular support for the opposing militant forces in Kabul itself, attacks are likely to continue.

10. In Regional Command North, there has been an increase in attacks on the Afghan National Security Forces and ISAF. Attacks on international organizations and NGO personnel are also noted although rare. Most of these attacks are thought to be criminally motivated, although opposing militant forces involvement is not ruled out. Attacks focus on lines of communication.

11. In Regional Command West, the situation has been generally calm. Southern Heart and Farah provinces remain the major security concerns. In Farah, the opposing militant forces continued to conduct roadside attacks against Afghan National Police (ANP) checkpoints over the reporting period. The opposing militant forces focus here as well is against the lines of communication.

12. In Regional Command South, less affected by the weather, the situation remained volatile during the entire winter. Opposing militant forces have maintained varying, sometimes elevated, levels of attacks. Higher levels of attacks in this region are attributable primarily to ISAF operations in the area, like Operation Achilles, and the importance opposing militant forces place on retaining freedom of movement in the region, defending strongholds and exploiting any tactical opportunity. The opposing militant forces seemed to avoid direct engagements and preferred indirect attacks. Additionally, the opposing militant forces strategy included countering Government/ISAF reconstruction and development efforts, such as the Kajaki Dam, in order to retain and expand their influence in the area.

13. In Regional Command East, the opposing militant forces attacks have increased as the weather improved. Afghan National Security Forces, ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom forces conducted several combined operations in early spring with little in the way of opposing militant forces response. Opposing militant forces are most active in Kunar province, where they seek to retain their freedom of movement and access to safe havens. In Nangahar province, popular support for the Government and ISAF has been damaged by civilian casualties and poppy eradication efforts. Some suicide attacks have taken place and small-scale harassment is also noted. Opposing militant forces activity is also reported in Ghazni, Logar and Laghman provinces along the main lines of communication. Opposing militant forces are likely to continue their aggressive propaganda campaign and intimidation of the local population.

Afghan National Army

14. Although lagging behind benchmarks towards the agreed 70,000 figure, Afghan National Army assigned manpower continued to increase steadily as duty presence increased by 20 per cent since the last reporting period. In terms of

equipment, the winterization programme implemented by the United States of America Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan also resulted in steady growth. Afghan National Army training saw the implementation of the Red-Yellow-Green training and operation cycle, allowing for two thirds of the corps soldiers to be available for operations. This cycle allows for down time for Afghan National Army soldiers and provides focused training cycles for manoeuvre units. Absence without leave levels are thus expected to be reduced. The Afghan National Army air corps is conducting requalification training of pilots, with the support of ISAF and the Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan.

Afghan National Police

15. Afghan National Police development is lagging behind compared to the targets presented to the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board. Greater international assistance in this field is essential. The International Police Coordination Board secretariat was established to provide such assistance in March 2007. The European Union also launched the 195 personnel European Police Mission to Afghanistan in June.

16. The Afghan National Auxiliary Police programme is nearing the end of its first year of training in priority provinces. Significant irregularities in the vetting process were revealed and need to be corrected. Overall, the programme is successfully developing and as of 25 March, approximately 4,700 Afghan National Auxiliary Police graduated and were deployed to facilitate Afghan National Police operations as well as in support to the Afghan National Army.

17. The Afghan National Civil Order Police is a newly formed force that will eventually grow to a total of 5,000. The Afghan National Civil Order Police is due to replace the Afghan Standby Police and will act as a quick reaction force at the provincial level. Finally, a Special Police Unit will be set up to focus on counter-terrorism and organized crime.

Judicial reform and rule of law

18. From an ISAF perspective, there needs to be an enhanced coordination and cohesion of international efforts in the areas of judicial reform and the rule of law. Efforts are mainly concentrated in Kabul. In view of the lack of progress at the regional level, ISAF is embedding rule of law and justice reform into its legal architecture. ISAF has undertaken a nationwide survey of the situation, seeking data in every area related to judicial reform.

19. The Attorney General's anti-corruption efforts remain scattered and unfocused, usually based on unsubstantiated allegations. Military-driven efforts have yielded some achievements in terms of launching the survey. Regional Command East is especially proactive in planning five provincial justice conferences. This local approach will allow ISAF to continue its drive in partnership with Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan to promote coordination.

Counter narcotics

20. There have been modest improvements in the capacity of the Ministry of Counter Narcotics to tackle the drugs trade. In particular, provincial capacity remains weak, although the recent change in leadership at the Ministry may lead to

a revitalized and refocused Afghan counter-narcotics effort. However, endemic corruption remains and this limits the effective implementation of the counter-narcotics strategy. There is also much evidence to suggest interference in the eradication process.

21. The Government of Afghanistan ruled out ground-based spraying for 2007 and eradication was only conducted using manual and mechanical methods. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reported an eradication total of 19,901 hectares (ha) (as at 10 June), including an eradication of 3,000 ha conducted in Helmand by the centrally directed Afghan Eradication Force. In most provinces where eradication occurred, it was conducted by Governor-led programmes but with varying degrees of success. The Governors of Kandahar and Nangahar have achieved significant levels of eradication, while others have not. There have also been allegations of corruption made against eradication forces and associated officials again in 2007.

22. While ISAF is not directly involved in eradication operations, the security threats presented by the drugs trade, including links between opposing militant forces and the trade are evident. Consequently, ISAF is working to maximize its support to counter-narcotics operations, in accordance with the provisions of the Operational Plan.

Disbandment of illegal armed groups

23. The efforts at disbandment of illegal armed groups have seen disappointing levels of weapons-collection activities. The lack of political and practical support for the disbandment of illegal armed groups is the main factor for this trend. Also one can attribute this to the increased level of insurgency and the Government's inability to demonstrate its resolve against uncooperative illegal armed groups. Nonetheless, a number of positive results have been noted. Following the President's endorsement of the disbandment of illegal armed groups strategy review in 2006, a revised action plan was approved in February 2006. This action plan focuses on the strategic level and highlights a number of issues, such as Government support, appropriate legislation and ministerial coordination, as well as the formal establishment of an effective enforcement capability.

Peace and reconciliation programme

24. The peace strengthening and reconciliation programme (Takhim-e-Sol), led by Professor Mujadeddi, is being maintained despite funding problems. It aims to provide socio-economic support to reconciled individuals and is being developed in cooperation with the international community and Government ministries and the Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan. Eleven field offices have now been established of which three have been opened in the south. The number of reconciled individuals had risen to approximately 3,300 by the end of March, compared to 2,600 at the end of November 2006.

Neighbouring countries

25. ISAF has continued to work with the Government of Afghanistan in contacts with neighbouring countries, primarily through the Tripartite Commission, which aims to improve military cooperation on border security, intelligence sharing and counter-improvised explosive device work.

26. Efforts to initiate collaborative planning between Afghan and Pakistan military have been met with some promising success. On a number of occasions, military-to-military coordination has occurred on border issues. In addition, military structures have been developed in Kabul, allowing Afghan and Pakistani officers to work together on a daily basis.

27. In early 2007, the Presidents of Afghanistan and Pakistan met in Ankara, at the invitation of the President of Turkey, to enhance various aspects of the cooperation between their countries and consequently agreed on the Ankara Declaration.

Governance

28. Internal Government coordination remains relatively poor, with limited consistency in messages from the Government and a lack of synchronization between ministries. The recently established National Communications Coordination Centre aims to improve this and weekly themes are being passed to ministries through the Policy Action Group. However, much work needs to be done so that consistent messages are sent by the Government to the population.

Development

29. Development within Afghanistan remains difficult to assess. While there is substantial funding available, the inability of the provincial leadership to produce development plans in accordance with the interim Afghan National Development Strategy requirements remains a concern. ISAF continues to play a role through the provincial reconstruction teams in providing support and advice at the local level.